

- The impact of digital integration and technology on patient safety, outcomes, and risk
- The impact of the effectiveness of teaching and learning innovations upon patient safety, outcomes and risk.

Dr Graham Stokes, dentist and MPS Foundation Chair, said: 'We are delighted to launch our third grant programme to support research projects on patient safety and the wellbeing of dental professionals.'

Funding for research in this area has been limited but our grant programmes have been changing that. Projects that we have supported in previous years have shown great success in promoting best practise and wellbeing across several countries.

'Our aim is simple: to fund research that improves safety for patients and the wellbeing of healthcare teams.'

'If you have a research project that you think is suitable, register your interest and join our growing community of grant

recipients. I strongly encourage healthcare professionals to consider applying for support whatever the scale of the proposal and to make the most of the additional resources available to support applicants this year.'

Applicants can register their interest and apply by visiting www.thempsfoundation.org and entering their details via the online grant portal. Calls for expressions of interest close on 3 May 2024 at 17:00 BST.

Dental professionals must advocate for water fluoridation

As government launch a new consultation into water fluoridation in the North East, the Oral Health Foundation is encouraging dental professionals to seize this opportunity by liaising with local MPs for further expansion of the scheme across the UK.

The consultation opened on 25 March with plans to extend the region's water fluoridation scheme to an additional 1.6 million people, targeting vulnerable populations, particularly children and young adults.

Although the benefits of water fluoridation to oral health are well established and accepted, as few as six million people in England live in areas with fluoridated water.

The Oral Health Foundation believes water fluoridation should be more widely implemented in the UK and wants dental professionals to play a key role in promoting the benefits to policymakers.

Dr Nigel Carter, Chief Executive of the Oral Health Foundation, said: 'By participating in the North East consultation, you have the power to improve oral health outcomes for millions of people for generations to come. As dental professionals, we witness the devastating effects of tooth decay daily, placing us in a unique position to provide invaluable insights into its true impact on patients' oral, general, and mental health.'

'This consultation also presents a critical opportunity to build relationships with our local MPs and advocate for water fluoridation plans in all our respective areas. The success of the North East consultation



will only strengthen our cause to expand water fluoridation across the UK.'

Although oral health is improving in England, the oral health survey of five-year-olds in 2019 showed that just under a quarter have tooth decay.

Each child with tooth decay will have on average three-to-four teeth affected. For those children at risk, it can happen early in life. The oral health survey of three-year-olds in 2020 found that 11% had visible tooth decay, with on average three teeth affected.

A 2022 health monitoring report showed five-year-olds in areas with fluoridated

water in England were less likely to experience tooth decay compared to areas without fluoride and are less likely to be admitted to hospital to have teeth removed.

Claire Stevens CBE, Spokesperson for the British Society of Paediatric Dentistry (BSPD), said: 'BSPD supports the fluoridation of public water supplies in communities where the burden of dental decay is severe enough to warrant this public health measure and fluoridation is technically feasible. [The announcement of this consultation] is monumental. It will be the first one conducted in an area of the UK for several decades. So, we welcome and will support this consultation – and look forward to seeing the outcomes. Dentistry is in crisis at the moment and now children's oral health is everyone's business – where creative approaches using proven interventions that deliver return on investment are more important than ever.'

Under the Health and Care Act 2022, the Secretary of State was given the authority by Parliament to implement new water fluoridation programmes. These initiatives have the backing of local authorities in the area, and the water company involved has prior experience in managing such schemes.

The government's consultation, titled 'Community water fluoridation expansion in the north east of England' can be found at www.gov.uk and will last 12 weeks. Following this, it will collect and review the feedback before making a decision on whether to extend the scheme.

You can find the contact details of your local MP by visiting www.members.parliament.uk/FindYourMP.